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## **PROMOTION OF SPORTS AND FITNESS THROUGH HEALTH IN SERBIA**

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**Abstract:** The modern consumer, today, is faced with an increasing amount of leisure time and a rising standard of living. These factors contribute to the emergence of a need for services, especially those that enhance health, increase vitality, and promise a long and quality life. Sport is one such activity. In this work presented to the scientific reading audience, we aim to showcase conducted research that discusses the impact of an increased standard of living on the growing demand for fitness center services. Additionally, we wanted to illustrate the majority of factors influencing users' choices for specific fitness centers. The research also examined all other relevant factors affecting the decision-making process that are not directly related to sports. The study involved 176 participants, and data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to describe patterns, independent samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the HI-square test were employed to examine differences between groups, and Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between variables.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Sport, Consumer, Promotion, Serbia

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## **Introduction**

In the life of a modern person, engaging in sports is of exceptional importance. Today, the quality of life and the improvement of health are significantly influenced by the quality of physical activity. There are numerous positive aspects of engaging in sports, and almost none against physical activity. In children, sports demonstrate that it is never too early to start adopting the principles of discipline and work habits that sports certainly develop (Ratković, Dašić, 2018). Emotional development contributes to the fact that active young athletes quickly resocialize and adapt to new society and environment. Positive aspects of regular physical activity are observed in both physical and mental health, as well as psychosocial development (Jovanović, et al., 2023). People suffering from serious illnesses find it easier to cope with their health conditions if they were previously active athletes or are still involved in sports. All these reasons have led to the adoption of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health by the World Health Organization in 2004, as well as the Resolution on the Improvement of Health and Healthy Lifestyles.

The latest initiative of the World Health Organization to include physical activity among domestic priorities is currently of great importance, aiming to combat the global increase in non-communicable diseases in both developed and developing countries. This represents a new challenge and a significant opportunity for the sports movement as a whole, particularly in terms of making sports accessible to everyone (Ratković, 2023). There are numerous reasons supporting engagement in sports. Sports and physical activity act preventively against childhood and adult obesity. Additionally, sports and physical activity develop self-awareness, reduce anxiety, and alleviate stress (Pugh, et al., 2020). Teaching a child how to win and accept defeat instills fair play in both the game and life, fostering friendships. Children involved in sports tend to have healthier eating habits (Franjić, 2023), smoke less, consume less alcohol, and experience fewer illnesses (Mansfield, Piggan, 2016; Ley, 2020; Bhan, et al., 2020; Micheli, L., Mountjoy, M., Engebretsen, L. et al., 2011).

Sports programs initiate the development of skills, teamwork, self-discipline, and better socialization in young people (Donaldson, Finch, 2011; Mountjoy, Junge, 2013; Kokko, et al., 2015; Penezić, 2021). Sport and physical activity fulfill the social lives of young individuals, shielding them from negative social phenomena and crime, fostering a more positive approach to life. The promotion of sports and fitness is of utmost importance in today's society. Engaging in physical activities not only contributes to a healthy lifestyle (Vlajković, 2023), but it also brings numerous benefits to individuals, communities, and even nations as a whole. Regular participation in sports and fitness activities helps individuals improve their physical strength and endurance, enhance their mental well-being, and develop important life skills such as teamwork and discipline.

Lastly, the promotion of sports and fitness yields extensive benefits for communities and nations as a whole (Dašić, Jeličić, 2016; Radaković, Marinković, 2021). It encourages social interactions and bonds between individuals, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion. Sports also impart crucial life skills such as teamwork, sportsmanship, discipline, and goal-setting, which are essential not only in athletic pursuits but also in professional and personal lives (Mountjoy, et al., 2017). Furthermore, the popularity of sports can lead to economic growth, attracting tourism and investment, and strengthening national identity and pride (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

The work presented to the reading audience aims to elucidate and contribute to acquiring fundamental concepts regarding what drives and generates consumption in sports and how consumers behave in this field. Consumer behavior in sports involves not only understanding professional athletes but also amateur athletes who differ from the former in their motives for engaging in sports. Understanding the motives of consumption in sports enables the effective combination of elements of the marketing mix and optimal positioning of products or services in the market.

## **Methodology**

The conducted research involved 176 respondents. The gender structure of the respondents is random, with a predominance of female respondents, totaling 113 females, while male respondents are 62. Regarding the age structure, the range is from 15 to 75 years. The income per capita ranges from 50,000 dinars to 100,000 dinars, with the fewest respondents having an income exceeding 150,000 dinars monthly.

Data processing was carried out using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Science) software version 25. Descriptive statistics were used in the paper to describe samples, independent samples T-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the Chi-square test to examine differences between groups. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between variables. A significance level of 0.05 was used as the threshold value.

More than half of the respondents have an income ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 dinars, while the fewest respondents have higher earnings exceeding 150,000 dinars monthly (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent [%]
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	62	35.4
<b>Female</b>	113	64.6
<b>Salary amount</b>		
<b>Less than 50000 din.</b>	32	19.2
<b>50000-100000</b>	88	52.7
<b>100000-150000</b>	27	16.2
<b>More than 150000</b>	20	12.0

As part of the research, we aimed to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in the agreement level of respondents with the given statements based on their income. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to investigate differences concerning income levels. The significance level of the ANOVA test is higher than the observed statistical level for all statements and the overall score, leading us to conclude that there is no statistically significant difference concerning income levels (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Differences in relation to the income of respondents

	Category	Middle value	F	P
<b>Mental health is affected by training.</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	4.53 ± 0.62	1.469	0.225
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	4.70 ± 0.46		
	Od 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	4.51 ± 0.57		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	4.70 ± 0.47		
<b>I train to maintain a youthful appearance.</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	3.56 ± 1.10	0.326	0.806
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	3.64 ± 1.00		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	3.51 ± 0.97		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	3.78 ± 0.85		
<b>In my diet, I take care of the intake of fruits and vegetables.</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	3.81 ± 0.93	0.716	0.544
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	3.90 ± 0.81		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	4.11 ± 0.80		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	4.00 ± 0.72		

<b>Healthy food and regular training are prerequisites for good health.</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	4.46 ± 0.71	0.684	0.563
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	4.50 ± 0.58		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	4.51 ± 0.57		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	4.70 ± 0.57		
<b>Famous person are important for promoting a fitness center.</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	2.56 ± 1.07	0.764	0.516
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	2.73 ± 1.14		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	3.00 ± 1.14		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	2.80 ± 1.00		
<b>The friendliness of the staff is important to my overall satisfaction with the training.</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	4.29 ± 0.64	1.044	0.375
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	4.07 ± 0.69		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	4.25 ± 0.65		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	4.05 ± 0.88		
<b>Fitness center employees are a good source of information about healthy living?</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	3.93 ± 0.67	1.632	0.184
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	3.71 ± 0.81		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	3.48 ± 0.80		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	3.70 ± 0.73		
<b>Total score</b>	Less than 50000 (N=32)	3.85 ± 0.41	0.165	0.920
	From 50000 to 100000 (N=87)	3.89 ± 0.40		
	From 100000 to 150000 (N=27)	3.91 ± 0.40		
	More than 150000 (N=20)	3.93 ± 0.38		

\* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

## Results and Discussion

As part of the research, we aimed to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in the agreement level of respondents with the given statements based on the type of training they undergo. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate differences concerning the type of training. The significance level of the ANOVA test is lower than the observed statistical level for the statement related to the impact of training on mental health, leading us to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference concerning the type of training. Respondents who engage in training exhibit a higher level of agreement compared to those who do not train (Table 3). The significance level of the ANOVA test is higher than the observed statistical level for the other statements and the overall score, leading us to conclude that there is no statistically significant difference concerning the type of training (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Differences in relation to the type of training of the respondents

	Category	Middle Value	F	p
<b>Mental health is affected by training.</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	4.62 ± 0.52	3.374	0.037*
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	4.66 ± 0.61		
	No (N=15)	4.00 ± 0.70		
<b>I train to maintain a youthful appearance.</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	3.59 ± 0.99	1.202	0.303
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	3.80 ± 1.08		
	No (N=15)	3.00 ± 0.70		
<b>In my diet, I take care of the intake of fruits and vegetables.</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	3.94 ± 0.80	0.238	0.789
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	3.93 ± 0.92		
	No (N=15)	4.20 ± 1.09		
<b>Famous person are important for promoting a fitness center.</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	4.50 ± 0.61	0.124	0.884
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	4.56 ± 0.51		
	No (N=15)	4.60 ± 0.54		
<b>Celebrities are important for the promotion of the fitness center.</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	2.74 ± 1.13	0.007	0.993
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	2.75 ± 1.00		
	No (N=15)	2.80 ± 0.44		
<b>The friendliness of the staff is important to my overall satisfaction with the training.</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	4.12 ± 0.69	1.553	0.215
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	4.37 ± 0.71		
	No (N=15)	3.80 ± 0.44		
<b>Fitness center employees are a good source of information about healthy living?</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	3.70 ± 0.76	0.712	0.492
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	3.86 ± 0.91		
	No (N=15)	3.40 ± 0.54		
<b>Total score</b>	Yes, I train recreationally (N=155)	3.88 ± 0.38	0.779	0.460
	Yes, I train professionally (N=15)	3.94 ± 0.51		
	No (N=15)	3.68 ± 0.23		

\* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

As part of the research, we wanted to examine whether there is a difference in respondents' responses based on gender regarding training. The Hi-square test was used to investigate differences concerning gender. Based on the results of the relationship between gender and type of training ( $\chi^2=0.406$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.816$ ), we conclude that there is no significant difference in the type of training based on gender (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Relationship between gender and type of training

		Type of training			
		Yes, I train recreationally	Yes, I train professionally	No	In total
Gender	Male	53	6	3	62
		85.5%	9.7%	4.8%	100%
	Female	101	10	2	113
		89.4%	8.8%	1.8%	100%
In total		154	16	5	175
		88.0%	9.1%	2.9%	100%

Based on the results of the relationship between gender and the number of weekly training sessions ( $\chi^2=0.406$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.816$ ), we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in the number of training sessions based on gender (Table 5). Based on the results of the relationship between gender and training method ( $\chi^2=23.592$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<0.005$ ), we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in the training method based on gender, where men predominantly train alone, and women train more in groups and with personal trainers compared to men (Table 6). Based on the results of the relationship between gender and the use of a training application or program ( $\chi^2=1.015$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.602$ ), we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of a training application or program based on gender (Table 7).

**Table 5.** Gender ratio and number of training sessions per week

		Number of training sessions per week			
		Once a week	Twice a week	Three or more times a week	In total
Gender	Male	3	15	43	61
		4.9%	24.6%	70.5%	100%
	Female	8	29	75	112
		7.1%	25.9%	67%	100%
In total		11	44	118	173
		6.4%	25.4%	68.2%	100%

**Table 6.** Relationship between gender and method of training

		Method of training				
		Alone	A group	With a personal trainer	Online/video striming	In total
Gender	Male	46	11	3	1	61
		75.4%	18.0%	4.9%	1.6%	100%
	Female	42	40	24	6	112
		37.5%	35.7%	21.4%	5.4%	100%
In total		88	51	27	7	173
		50.9%	29.5%	15.6%	4.05	100%

**Table 7.** The relationship between gender and the use of a training application or program

		Using an app or exercise program			
		Yes	No	I'm planning	In total
Gender	Male	17	44	1	61
		27.4%	71.0%	1.6%	100%
	Female	32	76	5	113
		28.3%	67.3%	4.4%	100%
In total		49	120	6	175
		28.0%	68.6%	3.4%	100%

Based on the results of the relationship between gender and supplement use ( $\chi^2=3.979$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.046$ ), we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in supplement use based on gender, where men use supplements more than women (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Relationship between gender and the use of supplements

		Use of supplements		
		Yes	No	In total
Gender	Male	30	32	62
		48.4%	51.6%	100%
	Female	36	77	113
		31.9%	68.1%	100%
In total		66	109	175
		37.7%	62.3%	100%



## **Conclusion**

Modern sports have become a part of almost all aspects of social life. They are an integral part of the economy, culture, healthcare system, educational programs from kindergarten to universities, and of course, many marketing campaigns. This has created an excellent foundation for the development of the sports economy and a specific branch, sports marketing. The constant commercialization of sports has forged an inseparable connection between profit and sports, leading to various scientific disciplines exploring the relationship between economics and sports, as well as the fundamental economic principles of sports (Dašić, et al, 2021). The public's interest in sports is continually growing, along with the desire for better sports results. Sports organizations especially leverage this fact to promote specific products or services, and even service packages, to increase the profits of sports organizations. The promotion of sports and fitness is a vital cornerstone of a healthy society. Engaging in physical activities contributes to improved physical health, mental well-being, and the development of important life skills. Additionally, it benefits communities and nations by creating social interactions, fostering skills and values, and promoting economic growth. Governments, educational institutions, and communities should collectively work together to encourage individuals of all ages to embrace an active lifestyle and reap the benefits of sports and fitness.

In this study, a significant number of respondents were surveyed, a total of 176, ranging in age from 15 to 75 years, and it was determined that people engage in sports for various reasons today. The most common reasons for participating in sports are health-related, for entertainment, and for the female segment of the surveyed population, aesthetic reasons also play a role. The male population tends to start engaging in sports earlier, shows more persistence, uses supplements, and primarily exercises independently in gyms.

The female population tends to start participating in sports somewhat later, utilizes the services of personal trainers, group training sessions, or online training. This population is characterized by a willingness to invest more money in both equipment and trainers and training sessions. They trust online marketing and are more susceptible to adopting information from social media.

In general, both male and female populations are active in sports, with the highest participation occurring between the ages of 20-25. Consequently, the promotion of sports activities and products plays a moderately significant role in the selection of sports products, which is a key conclusion drawn from the research goals of this study.

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